

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 14768 150741Z

13

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 EA-11 ACDA-19 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 DRC-01 /161 W

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R 141900Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8519

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 14768

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN

SUBJ: T.N. KAUL ON INDIAN OCEAN "CONFERENCE"

REF: STATE 240919, 240199, 241877, NEW DELHI 14766

SUMMARY: IT LOOKS TO US AS THOUGH AMBASSADOR KAUL WAS
VENTURING OFF ON HIS OWN IN SOUNDING OUR VIEWS ON AN
INDIAN OCEAN "CONFERENCE" WHEN HE TALKED TO THE SECRETARY
AND UNDER SECRETARY LAST WEEK. CONCEIVABLY HE HAS EYES-
ONLY INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTER OR MRS. GANDHI.
BUT WE HAVE FOUND NO GREAT EVIDENCE HERE SO FAR OF GOI
INTEREST IN AN INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE OR IN AN INDIAN
INITIATIVE REGARDING THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE.
END SUMMARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 14768 150741Z

1. DURING A DECEMBER 13 CALL ON THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S JOINT SECRETARY FOR POLICY AND PLANNING, N.B. MENON, THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR MENTIONED THAT PRESS REFERENCES HERE TO AMBASSADOR KAUL'S HAVING SUGGESTED A CONFERENCE OF INDIAN OCEAN LITTORAL STATES AND MARITIME POWERS SEEMED AT ODDS WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S COMMENTS TO PARLIAMENT THAT NO SUCH CONFERENCE WAS NECESSARY. MENON, WHO HAD EARLIER REFERRED TO KAUL'S REPORTING ON HIS CONVERSATIONS, EXPRESSED PUZZLEMENT AND SAID HE THOUGHT KAUL HAD NOT SUGGESTED ANY NEW CONFERENCE. HE DOUBTED INDIA WOULD TAKE AN INITIATIVE ON THIS SUBJECT AND THOUGHT THAT IF ANYONE WAS GOING TO SUGGEST SUCH A CONFERENCE IT WOULD BE MRS. BANDARANAIKE.

2. A UN DIVISION DIRECTOR FAMILIAR WITH THE SUBJECT ALSO TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER HE DOUBTED INDIA WOULD PROMOTE A CONFERENCE OR TAKE ANY INITIATIVE WITH REGARD TO THE INDIAN OCEAN PEACE ZONE PROPOSAL. GOI STAFF WORK ON THE SUBJECT WAS MINIMAL. THERE WAS HIGH-LEVEL INTEREST IN THE MATTER FROM TIME TO TIME, BUT BECAUSE OF SENSITIVITY SRI LANKA'S REACTION IT WAS UNLIKELY INDIA WOULD PREPMT WITH AN INDEPENDENT INDIAN INITIATIVE THE LEADING ROLE SRI LANKA HAD STAKED OUT FOR ITSELF.

3. WE NOTE THAT KAUL TOLD THE UNDER SECRETARY INDIA WAS SOUNDING OUT "THE US AND OTHERS" TO SEE WHETHER THERE WAS INTEREST. OUR CONTACTS HERE INDICATE THAT NEITHER THE BRITISH NOR THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN APPROACHED. A SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICER MENTIONED THAT NEGOTIATIONS HAD BEEN DIFFICULT WITH THE INDIANS ON THE BRIEF REFERENCE TO THE INDIAN OCEAN IN THE GANDHI-BREZHNEV DECLARATION. BUT HE THOUGHT THE INDIANS HAD NOT MENTIONED THE IDEA OF A CONFERENCE AND THAT THE PASSAGE IN THE JOINT DECLARATION DID NOT ENVISAGE A CONFERENCE.

4. INDIAN CORRESPONDENTS HAVE REPORTED BACK FROM WASHINGTON THAT THE IDEA OF AN INDIAN OCEAN "CONFERENCE" WAS RAISED DURING KAUL'S CONVERSATION WITH THE SECRETARY (NEW DELHI 14475). SAGAR IN THE DECEMBER 9 HINDU SAID THAT THOUGH THE US HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN IN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 14768 150741Z

FAVOR OF A CONFERENCE OF INDIAN OCEAN LITTORAL STATES WITH OTHER WORLD MARITIME POWERS, "MR. KAUL APPEARS TO HAVE GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT FOLLOWING MR. BREZHNEV'S OWN SUPPORT FOR THE SUGGESTION (SIC), THE US IS NOW NOT AGAINST THE CONCEPT."

5. I WAS ASKED ABOUT SUCH A CONFERENCE DURING A MEETING WITH THE INDIAN PRESS ON DECEMBER 13. I FOLLOWED THE

EXCELLENT LINE EMPLOYED BY THE SECRETARY WITH KAUL THAT WE WOULD HAVE TO STUDY THE MATTER.

6. COMMENT: IN SUM, WE HAVE FOUND NO EVIDENCE HERE SO FAR OF INDIAN GOVERNMENT INTEREST IN AN INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE OR NEW INITIATIVES REGARDING THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE. THE INDIAN POSTURE IN RECENT YEARS HAS BEEN ONE OF SUPPORT FOR NON-ALIGNED DECLARATIONS AND UN RESOLUTIONS ON THE INDIAN OCEAN PEACE ZONE--BUT THE INDIANS HAVE NOT BEEN OUT IN FRONT. THEIR POSTURE HAS BEEN USEFUL TO THE GOVERNMENT IN DEALING WITH PARLIAMENTARY FUSS OVER WHAT INDIA IS DOING ABOUT US FLEET DEPLOYMENTS. BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS UNDER NO PUBLIC PRESSURE THAT WOULD JUSTIFY A SEPARATE INDIAN INITIATIVE.

7. IT LOOKS TO US, THEREFORE, AS THOUGH KAUL HAS BEEN FLOATING HIS OWN TRIAL BALLOON--UNLESS HE HAS SOME EYES-ONLY INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE TOP OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OR MRS. GANDHI. NOW THAT HE'S BACK IN DELHI FOR A MONTH, HE MIGHT CONCEIVABLY TRY TO INTEREST THE GOI IN HIS CONFERENCE PROPOSAL, IF INDEED HE INITIATED IT.

8. WE'LL KEEP OUR EARS COCKED FOR ANY FURTHER ECHOES HERE FROM THE KAUL PROPOSAL. WE DID NOT WANT TO STIR UP INTEREST BY BROADER SOUNDINGS THIS WEEK AND WE HAVE NOT DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH SRI LANKA EMBASSY PERSONNEL. PERHAPS COLOMBO CAN PICK UP SOME FEEDBACK. MOYNIHAN

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